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JOINING THE CHURCH





Joining the Church

OR,

MATERIALS FOR CONVERSATION

BETWEEN A

Minister and Intending Communicant

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER B. GROSART

ST. GEORGE'S, BLACKBURN, LANCASHIRE

AUTHOR OF 'SMALL SINS;' 'JESUS MIGHT
OR, CHRIST FOR ALL THE WORLD, AND
WORLD FOR CHRIST,' 'THE LAMBS
SAFE,' 'HELPER OF JOY,' 'KID
BEARER,' ETC., ETC.

A New Edition—Revised.

'This do in Remembrance of I

LONDON:

HODDER AND STOUGHTON, PATERNOSTER

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BLACKBURN: ROBERT GRAHAM

1879.

138. 2. 531



'When therefore men come so rudely and unprepared to the receiving of these holy rites, as ordinarily they do, it is a sign they never think of that high and sacred *authority* that hath ordained them; but only conceive and esteem of them as of certain formalities which custom and long continuance hath made a fashion.'—WILLIAM BRADSHAW (1636).

TO
The Rev. Andrew A. Bonar, D
GLASGOW,
THE BIOGRAPHER OF M'CHEY
AND
MY 'BROTHER BELOVED ;'
I RE-INSCRIBE THIS LITTLE BOOK
AS A SLIGHT MEMORIAL OF A
VALUED FRIENDSHIP.

A. B. C





IN Christ's death all Christi-
ity is briefly summed ; for
it we may observe the just
of God satisfied, the power
Satan vanquished, the liberty of m
from the slavery of sin and death pu
chased, all figures of the Old Testame
verified, all promises of the New ra
fied, all prophecies fulfilled, all deb
discharged, all things requisite for t
redemption of mankind and the worl
restoration accomplished. Therein v
have a pattern of obedience to the la
breath, of humility descending as lo
as hell, of meekness putting up insuffe
able wrongs, of patience enduring me





PREFACE.

IN the present little volume I have written out the substance of what I have been used to say to INTENDING COMMUNICANTS for the first time, who have applied to be received into my own successive Congregations. Finding that what I have said has often been wished by Communicants in a permanent form, and being also desirous to be able to put into the hands of Applicants something fitted to be a manual, *i.e.*, a book easily carried in the hand and useful for handy reference always—the more readily consented to print it.



words. If, besides my own using of it, these 'materials' in any way aid my beloved fellow-servants of the one Master, I shall rejoice, I shall be grateful. As matter of course, it is intended simply as a Manual, as heads or hints for initial and after conversations, not at all as a treatise on the Lord's Supper. Of treatises and larger books on the Lord's Supper—some above all price—there are happily many, elder and later. But I am not aware that there is anything that pre-occupies the place sought to be humbly occupied by these 'materials,' for ministers on the one hand, and intending Communicants on the other. So I wrote fully thirteen years ago (1865); and the living circulation of the book as stereotyped, has been extremely gladdening, as have been manifold letters from far and near all through those years.

With reference to the reception of Applicants, perhaps a caution will be

Preface.

accepted by my brethren, viz. :—The
may be knowledge, love, grace, and
the same time incapacity to expr
either. In my own experience I ha
found myself about to keep back a tr
child of God (as afterwards seen),
the idea that there was extreme igr
rance, and have been startled to discov
that agitation and awe parched t
tongue and confused the memory ; a
that after a few kind words kind
spoken, and assurance to the Applica
that he or she was there not to
puzzled and cross-questioned, but
converse with a Friend willing a
wishful to advise and guide, there we
given unmistakable evidences of
deep and true spiritual life. In conf
mation of this, it is recorded of the Re
Adam Gib of Edinburgh, that havi
once or twice dissuaded a young wom
from thinking of joining the Church,
deeming her ill-informed and unable
answer elementary questions, he w

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED.

'I am the Lover of purity, and the Giver of all sanctity.

'I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of My rest.

'Make ready for Me a large upper room furnished, and I will keep the Passover at thy house with My Disciples.

'If thou wilt have Me come unto thee, and remain with thee ; purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart.

'Shut out the whole world, and all the throng of sins ; sit thou as it were a sparrow alone upon the house-top, and think over thy transgressions in the bitterness of thy soul.

'For every one that loveth will prepare the best and fairest place for his beloved ; for herein is known the affection of him that entertaineth his beloved.'—*De Imitatione Christi*, iv.

12, 1.

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carefully such portion, and to come prepared to converse about it. Hence I begin thus and here :—

FIRST VISIT.

Applicant.



YOU will remember, sir, that I wished to 'join the Church.'

Minister.—I do : and I am glad to see you again. I mentioned that there were certain things that you would do well to carry away with you, that you might know beforehand what from visit to visit we are to speak about ; and I presume you are now here to 'converse' with me on the first division of the little book handed to you.

Applicant.—Yes, sir, I should like to do so.

Minister.—What was the first thing I mentioned as a preparation.

Applicant.—*Thought, sir.*

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Minister.—Yes.

(1.) *Thought* is needed as a preparation for joining The Church. It is a light matter to avow oneself to be a Christian (=one-of-Christ's): and yet it must be done deliberately. It is while Peter *'thought* on the vision that the Lord gave him such wonderful manifestations of Himself, and of His purposes 'toward the Gentiles' (A. x. 19). And if we think on what we are about, seriously and searchingly, we shall receive divine guidance. 'If any of you,' says James, 'lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering' (i. 5). (The Bible word for that kind of thinking which I now intulcate is 'consider;') and unless we do that, unless we take time calmly and solemnly to reflect on the step we take, we are certain to go wrong. I have used the word 'solemnly'

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but I do not mean by it gloomily or sadly, much less with repression of our natural joy. What I wish is very well expressed by good old Thomas White of London, in his precious little book on 'Meditation,' in a sentence which he prefixes every now and then to his chapters: 'Be convinced of and affected with the presence of God.'¹ Such is the right way to think rightly, and yet pleasantly; to place ourselves 'before God,' to pause, and all alone with Him, feel that the eyes of the Heart-Searcher are now upon us, and that He knows that we seek to join The Church as being already His children. Even a little child stays its innocent laughter if mother or father has anything grave

¹ 'A Method and Instructions for the Art of Divine Meditation, with instances of the several kinds of solemn Meditation.' 2d Ed. 1672. 42mo. Pp. 212, 223, 233, 248, 257, 269, 281, 295.

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spond to your wish to have them distinctly stated.

First of all, there is the momentous question, What are your thoughts *about God*? of His character? of His righteousness? of His justice? of His holiness? of His faithfulness? Looking up to God, do you 'justify' Him in everything? Are you satisfied that He is right in all He *does*, and true in all He *says*? Right thoughts of the great God with Whom we have to do are an indispensable prerequisite to joining the Church.

Further: Let me suppose that you are free to say, 'I believe that.' I ask you, then, to turn up and read and think about these texts, a few among many: Ps. xix. 9, 'The judgments of the Lord are true [truth] and righteous altogether.' Ps. cxix. 7, 62, 106, 137, 138, 160, 'I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned Thy righteous judgments.' 'At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee, be-

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cause of Thy righteous judgments have sworn, and I will perform it, I will keep Thy righteous judgments 'Righteous art Thou, O Lord.' 'testimonies that Thou hast commanded are righteous, and very faithful.' 'Word is true from the beginning, every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.' Ps. cxlv. 17, 'Lord is righteous in all His ways, holy in all His works.' Zech. vii 'They shall be my people, and I be their God, in truth and righteousness.' Isa. xlv. 24, 'Surely shall say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' 1 Cor. i. 30, 'Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' (Compare also Job xxxii. Rom. iii. 20.) 'Consider' these sayings, my Friend, and I hope you be able to say to me, 'These are thoughts of God.'



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Applicant.—By God's blessing I'll read every one, and answer you as 'before' Him.

Minister.—I would put before you a second thing, viz. What are your thoughts *about yourself*? I have asked you to see that you 'apprehend' emphatically the *righteousness of God* and the *grace of God*. I need hardly remark that this implies that we have also right thoughts about ourselves in relation to God. Try then to think out questions such as these: What am I sure about concerning myself as before God? What do I think of my own sinfulness? of myself as a sinner in the sight of God? In short, I wish to shut you up to look at and let look at you this inquiry: What are your honest thoughts about yourself as by nature a sinner, by grace no more than a sinner saved?

At this point I would distinguish between thinking and feeling. Feeling sometimes is delayed, sometimes is to



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be distrusted. 'Our *salvation* depends upon the truth of grace ; our *consolation* upon the degrees of grace.'¹ Apart from feeling, therefore, Is your judgment satisfied, that as you are naturally, are not right in God's sight ?

This again leads to another question. What are your thoughts *about the nature of acceptance with God* ? There is God and you must face Him. How ? There is sin, your sin. There is guilt, your guilt, and your condemnation. How are you to be 'delivered' ? If you regard yourself as already delivered. What is your ground ? There is the 'Blood of Christ' (1 John i. 7). What relation has it to you ? What relation have you to it ? There is the 'Law' God grasping you. How do you explain its unloosing ? There is Faith. What

¹ Robert Purnell : 'The Way step by step to a sound and saving Conversion' 1655. P. 99.

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are your thoughts of it? Whence cometh it? Is your answer, 'It is the gift of God'? (Eph. ii. 8).

Finally: If, when you call next, you can say, 'I believe in the *righteousness* of God,' 'I justify God in everything;' if your thoughts about yourself are that you are a sinner, in yourself sinful, and condemned, and perishing; if your only hope and confidence is in Him Who is the 'way, the truth, and the Life,' in Him as 'redeeming' by "the blood of His cross," then there was a time when you had not these thoughts; and I would suggest this question, *How did they begin?* Whence came your present views of God? of yourself? of the way of acceptance? How do you trace the beginning of the change? Do you recognize that it was the grace of a gracious God which 'led' you? Do you acknowledge that of yourself you never had turned to the Lord? Do you ascribe



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the slaying of your 'enmity' of heart toward God, to God the Spirit quickening you? Do you avouch that you are *all* to Christ?

These are very solemn questions and I am anxious that, as an intelligent being, you should be able to answer them to your own judgment, to your own conscience, to God and to me—and to one only, but all. You have God to think of, and the work of Christ in its wide range. You have your own state as in the sight of God, and your relation to the 'shed blood' (Mark xiii. 34), and to God the Holy Spirit. In a word, I have with all earnestness to ask you to seek from the Lord 'wisdom' and 'grace,' to enable you to give good reasons for thinking yourself to be *converted*. It is an old-fashioned, plain word; but really it is the one word that describes the difference between a child of God and a child of wrath—the word that adequately



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2. The gospel record received : 'For our gospel came not in word only.' Not only heard, but hearkened to.
3. The gospel efficacious in the heart : 'Came in power.'
4. The gospel sanctifying the nature : 'Came in the Holy Spirit.'
5. The gospel thus sanctifying brings peace. 'Came in assurance,' *i.e.*, in full weight on measure (*ἰσχυρῶς*).¹
6. The gospel thus giving assurance

¹ It is a fair question whether St. Paul means the subjective fulness of conviction with which he spoke, or as *above*, the subjective fulness of conviction with which the gospel was received by the Thessalonians ; or, simply the fact that he had the opportunity and privilege in Thessalonica of setting forth the gospel in no partial and limited

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the same. With oneness of spiritual life, there is infinite variety of form and outcome. Let the former be present, and we may be easy in absence of the most covetable specialities; save only, that whatever grace we see in another we may ask in prayer. John Reyner thus describes the permanent characteristics of a believer: 'A gracious person,' he says, 'is one that is endued with divine graces, and lives in the exercise of them. He hath the work of grace for his principle, the word of grace for his rule, and the God of grace for his end. . . . He must have God's word for what he believes, God's warrant for what he acts, and God's promise for what he expects.'¹

Minister.—Think over what we have conversed about to-night, and next time put any questions or make any state-

¹ 'The Character of a Gracious Person.' 1669. Pp. 9, 12.

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ments you please. Come to me as your friend. We shall speak of what is printed under "Second Visit" on an evening.

Applicant.—Good evening, sir.

Minister.—Good-bye [God-be-with you].

SECOND VISIT.



SUPPOSE preliminary matters springing out of the former visit : and then proceed. Assuming that the Applicant satisfies in regard to his or her ground for believing himself or herself to be 'born again,' to be possessed of the 'new heart or new nature,' further conversations naturally turn on the preparation for the 'keeping' of the Supper, wherein instruction is given how to be 'worthily' to do so. Having thus found that thought is needed as a preparation for joining the Church, and having indicated a variety of topics



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be thought about, other things remain—three of which I classify under this Second Visit, though it will sometimes be found that the matter of the First Visit demands repeated and prolonged conversations. I observe:

(2.) *Affection* is needed as a preparation for joining the Church. We are not merely to retire by ourselves and 'think,' however deeply and however long, and however 'of faith.' We have seen that it is becoming to do these things. But they are means, not ends. Let me explain. It is our duty to take the Bible with us on thus retiring—to 'search' it—to inform ourselves of what is 'written' on the particular service before us, 'to show the Lord's death until He come'—and then think. 'There can be no doubt that that is what is commanded: and therefore I must obey.' There needs something tenderer than mere obedience. What saith Jesus? 'If ye *love* Me, keep My

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meditate day and night' (Ps. i. 2). Elsewhere we read: 'While I was musing, the fire burned' (Ps. xxxix. 3). All that is fitting, quickening, right; and throughout there will be what our venerated Fathers were wont to call 'Ejaculations,'—darting words of gratitude, of entreaty, of resolution, of self-dedication, of confession, of joy, of sorrow, of faith, of love, of peace, of blessedness.

But besides these, there must be express, particular, personal *prayer*. There is something sadly wrong, if, as a rule, son or daughter seek to hide from father or mother their going or coming, companionships, reading, letter-writing, or the like. And there is something perilously wrong if we go anywhere, or do anything, or resolve on any course, that we cannot and do not tell God all about in prayer, and seek His blessing on. Indeed I know no better, more decisive test of the

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after this sort. But I must ask that our joining the Church, by sitting down at the Table of the Lord, be felt as a real self-surrender, self-dedication ; as responding to the apostolic demand, 'Yield yourselves to the Lord ;' as acquiescing in the divine claim, 'Ye are not your own ;' as doing so calmly, deliberately, not on impulse, but counting the cost ; as looking at what the Bible says about God and His will, and declaring, 'I give myself up to that holy will of God.' When we sit down at the Lord's Supper, we do practically make such a promise, such an oath, put our hands to a Covenant, even to 'the Everlasting Covenant.' By joining the Church we make a *profession* that we are Christians ; we lead all to expect from us a 'walk and conversation becoming the gospel,'—a life which shall be the outcome of a spiritual life within. Well ! (to take very humble illustrations) What would we think of the merchant,



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. I have found it useful, after the 'Materials' of these two visits, to go over the different points brought up in them, enlarging or applying, questioning and answering, according to need. Thus under each particular I have given examples and proof-texts. I have specially found it rewarding, as encouraging the timid and checking the thoughtless, briefly to engage *on every visit in prayer, kneeling*. My own rule is to converse separately with each single applicant, and then to assemble all together. I likewise receive all new members publicly before the congregations specially assembled on the Friday evening before our Communion Sunday.



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THIRD VISIT.



SUPPOSE the Applicant is to satisfy: and that the Minister finds the knowledge, motives, and professions to be sound. It is thereupon my practice to read and explain the WARRANT for observing *the Lord's Supper*, as contained in the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, xi. 20-29.

Minister.—I accept, my Friend, what you have professed and promised. May the Lord give you grace to 'perform.'

Applicant.—I do, sir, as before God, profess that I know myself to be a sinner; that I have given myself by His enabling Spirit to the Lord Jesus as my Saviour; that it is my purpose to live as becomes a child of our Heavenly Father in the world, in the Church, and in secret. I avow myself to be a Chri-



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he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.'

Minister.—We shall go over to-night vers. 20 to —, and then on another visit the remainder.

. The division must be determined by the time available. I have classed the whole of our explanation of the Warrant under the Third Visit; but vers. 20-23 (middle), and vers. 23 (middle)-25, and vers. 25-29 furnish 'Materials' for successive visits if required or deemed expedient.

Minister.—Let us go back then to ver. 20: 'When *ye* come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper.' I have emphasized 'ye' in reading this verse, because I wish to make a remark based upon it, viz. that the most advanced Christian needs to be reminded of very simple



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Corinthians needed such a warning, who are we to refuse it? Let us beware of supposing, that when we have taken our place at the Table of the Lord along with the members of the congregation to which we belong—those not members being seated elsewhere—that thereby we ‘keep’ the Supper. Merely to be ‘together,’ to sit beside one another, and ‘eat and drink’ as He has appointed of the memorial-symbols, is possible without any real, living, actual communion with the Lord. This, not that, is to ‘eat the Lord’s Supper.’

I pass on—vers. 21, 22. . . . Here is a practical exemplification of the Apostle’s after-description of God’s Word: ‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for *reproof*, for *correction*, for instruction in righteousness’ (2 Tim. iii. 16). It is even so: and the children of God equally with others stand in



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portunity of 'magnifying' themselves by the splendour and fulness of their contribution to the Feast,¹ and tacitly 'put to shame' those who, as being 'poor,' were unable to make any such display. All this is abandoned with us.—But I would throw out a hint to those who have means, viz. That each recurring Communion affords an excellent opportunity for gladdening some lowly fellow-members by giving of our home-comforts to them. How many retire from the Table of the Lord to their own homes to 'eat and drink' of their abundance, with little or no thought of the 'poor' Communicant, 'poor, but rich in faith,' who sat beside them, but who returns it may be to a fireless grate, a meagre meal, a cheerless house! Methinks it should sweeten

¹ Called Agapæ, or Love-feasts. See Dr. Hodge on the place, and his references.



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our own bread, and illumine as we
soften our own hearts, to see to it :
on the sacramental-Sabbath at least
'poor' of our Congregation placed
us received tokens of not being for-
ten. I would have the brotherhood
sisterhood of a common 'faith and l
in and toward, the great Elder Bro
to actualize itself thus, outside
walls of the Church as well as wit
Within we make profession of it, e
to lowliest confession. But what i
worth if it be not transfigured
deeds? I barb my own poor words w
the fine sarcasm of James: 'What d
it profit, my brethren, though a r
say he hath faith [*say* /], and have
works? Can [the] faith save him [/
... the sayer]? If a brother or si
be naked, and destitute of daily fo
and one of you say unto them, De
in peace [= the usual salutation :
blessing], be ye warmed and filled ;
withstanding ye give them not th



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virtually a new Law, that name which above others asserts that Jesus is the Lawgiver should be emphasized. 'The Lord' is He who 'spake' on Sinai; and this 'new commandment' carried with it the same divine authority. Be it observed that 'Lord' is employed throughout (vers. 23, 26, 27, 29, 32). If then any one ask us, 'by what authority' we thus 'show the Lord's death,' our answer must be, 'the Lord,' the Lawgiver, has appointed it.

What the Lord communicated to St. Paul he had 'delivered' unto the Church at Corinth, as no doubt he 'delivered' it wherever he went. Having so 'delivered' it, they were 'without excuse' in departing from its simple but expressive ritual.

Here, as elsewhere, the servant is sheltered by the Master; and 'delivering' what he has 'received,' he can admit no plea, no refusal. This adherence to what is 'written' is a vital



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thing: and William Bradshaw has it with much animation. 'Would ministers of Christ,' he asks, 'who by their office to dispense these and other the like ordinances of Christ have their ministry not contemned, truly revered, they should make appear, as Paul doth here, that the minister no other word or sacrament prescribe no other worship, preach no other doctrine, bind men's consciences with no other laws, allure them with no other promises, fear them with no other threatenings, than such as they can both say and show that they have received from Christ Himself.'

We have the ordinance next described with unexaggerated simplicity and equally of fact and emotion:—'Th

'A Preparation to the receiving of Christ's Body and Blood, directing weak Christians how they may worthily receive the same.' 10th ed. 1636. P. 21



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ing—all hope eclipsed—life's sky unsunned, unmooned, unstarred—an ever broadening, well-nigh tangible night folding round about us—often there flashes out—as in the mystic, windowless chamber of darkness in the Temple, the 'Cloud of the Glory' burned above the Mercy-Seat, illumining the Blood—the shining face of Jesus to the wet eye strained upward. Like the ringing down of a skylark's song, itself lost in the clouds, there falls in full and fuller tones some Christ-full assurance, such as that: 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? *Let him trust* in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God' (Isa. l. 10; cf. lix. 9-12). What is this but 'remembering' Jesus? The densest 'night' is dispelled by such remembrance. Never is the Lord so near as when 'night' of sorrow, or trial, or temptation is bending over us. . . .



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when 'night' comes, there is free rein given to sinning ; and all *sin* is a 'betrayal' of Christ. I use the word 'betrayal,' for I am assuming Christian profession. Be it ours to beware of how we are occupied in the interval from Sabbath to Sabbath, from Communion to Communion, and especially 'in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night,' and where we suppose no one knows us. Let us go nowhere in the dark that we would not wish to be seen going to in broad daylight. Let us be nowhere, let us be about nothing that the thought of a friend seeing or knowing would bring a blush to our cheek or agitation to our conscience.

Is it not worthy of note also, that many of the most remarkable occurrences in the manifestation of grace have taken place at 'night,' or in darkness? It was while sin's first shadows were falling on the young and radiant

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earth, that the 'First Promise' was placed, as a silver-shining lamp, in the hands of the fallen Pair. It was against the mighty rain-clouds that had drowned the world, the covenant rainbow flung its arch of light. It was under a 'horror of darkness' that God 'appeared' unto Abraham; and in the night, by 'smoking-lamp and furnace, passing through the sacrifice, proclaimed the glorious hope, 'In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' It was from the 'pavilion of clouds,' through which flamed the unsufferable splendour, that the Law was 'given' on Sinai. It was in 'dreams and visions' of the night that Job and Isaiah and Ezekiel 'saw' the Eternal. Then turning to the Life of the Lord, and excluding what has already been showed, it was at night He became 'God manifest in the flesh;' for we read, that while shepherds watched their flocks by night, angels appeared



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unto them with the amazing message. It was at 'night' the 'child' was carried 'into Egypt.' It was at 'night' He retired alone and prayed those prayers that bore up His love for a perishing world before His Father and our Father. It was at 'night' He walked on the sea, even as God 'treading upon the waves' thereof (Job ix. 8). It was at 'night' He received the visit of Nicodemus, and spake with him of the great change. It was at 'night' (as it would seem) that, antitype of Daniel's overwhelming 'vision,' He was 'transfigured' before His disciples 'on the Mount,' and His garments became as the light. It was at 'night' He stepped into the disciples' chamber, 'when the door was shut,' and 'showed' Himself after He had 'risen.' It was when 'night' came down on Patmos that He burst before the burdened eyes of John. It is at 'night,' and as in a moment, He is to come to 'judge' the world. .



I recount these things, that, as 'night' comes and goes, we may sanctify our thoughts with their memories.

One sentence—The ordinance is called the Supper ; and, as we have seen, the Lord Himself instituted it at 'night.' Therefore it may be asked, Why do not we in these days celebrate the memorial-service as a supper, and at night ? The answer is : The Lord associated it originally with the Passover, the 'night'-meal. But that was the last Passover. From that 'night' there was to be no more passover-keeping ; and hence no longer association of the Lord's Supper therewith. There is no special time nor hour appointed.

I proceed. 'He took bread.' Had it been merely a Passover, you will observe, He had taken not 'bread,' but of 'the lamb.' But it was a new Feast, the memorial of a mightier redemption, and for it 'He took *bread*.'

Now follows a very touching and re-

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markable, and strange, thing : ' And when He had given thanks, He brake it.' I call that a very touching and remarkable, even strange, thing. And why ? Because of the *thing done*, the *Speaker*, and the *event*. Let me say a little about each.

1. *The thing done*, is touching and strange. Thanks. For what ? For *death*. ' When He had given thanks, He brake it.' Now was not that a strange thing to do ? We all cling to life. This is an instinct which pulsates in sanctified and unsanctified heart alike. You remember how Hezekiah felt when Isaiah brought to him the Lord's message of death, Let us read Isa. xxxviii. 1-3. Even so : he turned his blanched face to the wall, and wept — wept sore. And yet he was a ' good man,' one who, had he then died, should most certainly have ' entered into rest.' Nevertheless, when the abrupt summons reached him, he shrank back, and

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pleaded to be spared. So is it universally. No man in supreme possession of himself would willingly shorten his life by a day, by an hour. Then comes as with a rush o' times the deep yearning to know the unknown, to go up the great stairs that lead through the dark unto the throne. But it is checked as the sea-sand checks the overleaping waves, with 'Not yet.' . . . 'wait His time.' All legislation proceeds upon this as an axiom ; for the highest penalty that the Law exacts is to take a man's life. Having taken it, law can reach no further, or ask costlier vindication. Even our every-day speech 'bewrays' the secret restraint that the thought of death exercises. We seek by all manner of guising and disguising names to keep it out of sight, to hide its realness. And let any one introduce into a gay, happy company, the stern, grim word 'death,' instantly he is made to feel that he has spoken 'out of sea-



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son ;' the friends were met to enjoy themselves, and all etiquette is violated by such charnel-talk.

It was not always so, even among the ancient heathen. As History tells, there was wont to be introduced at the great Feasts of Egypt, and placed in the centre of the Table, a model of the human skeleton,

'That ivory cage from which the bird
has flown,'

and from either hand depending a scroll, having this legend, 'Mortal ! Behold ! I was once as you are ! Behold ! You will soon be as I am.' Suppose that were done now, what exclamations there should be ! Suppose further, that in such circumstances one were not only to introduce the subject of 'death,' but to take the attitude of prayer, and 'give thanks' for it, how should all eyes turn and look and wonder ! Well ! the last is what the Lord Jesus now did. 'He took bread,' and



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‘when He had given thanks, He brake it.’ This He did, plainly signifying, approaching ‘death.’ That lay at the bottom of the ‘breaking;’ that burdened with blessing His thanks.

2. *The Speaker*, makes the thing done touching and strange. Thanks for death. Thanks for His *own death*. We read on: ‘And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.’ I am afraid that we are not sufficiently impressed with this element of the Lord’s suffering, the ever-present knowledge of His death. We come into the world to live; He came into it to die. And the careful reader of the Gospels comes upon manifold indications that the thought of His death was rarely absent from His mind, falling like a bar of shadow across the sunlight of the present. The very keynote of the Baptist’s ministry told of His death. ‘Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh



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away the sin of the world !' 'Taket away.' How ? By 'blood ;' by sacrificial death. In the outset of His own public work the presence of this thought was revealed very touchingly. The Scribes and Pharisees came to Him, and interrogated Him on their miserable ritualism of Fasting. Soft as child-tears was the answer : ' Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them ? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days ' (Mark ii. 19, 20). That ' taken away ' is tremulous with the pathos of a conscious but only half-revealed knowledge of the ' death ' that was to end His sorrowful life. Onward, He is ever and anon dropping hints by parable and interpretation, by allusion and act, of the same unforgettable end. Up



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Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified' (Matt. xxvi. 1, 2). You perceive, therefore, that in instituting the Supper 'on the night on which He was betrayed,' the Lord did so as aware of the coming death ; and thus, when 'He took bread,' and when He had 'given thanks, brake it' and said, 'Take, eat : this do in remembrance of Me,' He 'gave thanks' for His own death. Surely we have here strangeness to very awesomeness ?

It had been different had the narrative run that Peter, and John, and James, and the disciples as a whole, knowing all that was to issue from His death, 'gave thanks.' We could have understood that ; could have realized the hush of awe as the words went upward, the dropping tears as sorrow broke down their faith, as love darkened their hope, as the present filled with terror the Future. Nevertheless I put



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it to you if we should not have regarded such 'thanks' in the presence of the Lord as 'strange' to hardness and harshness ; much as though Abraham had not only obeyed the awful commandment, but 'given thanks' for it.

We can also conceive circumstances in which we might 'give thanks' for the 'death' of another, ay, of our nearest and dearest. One shrinks from even trying to utter thoughts and feelings that with emphasis 'are too deep for tears,' much more for words. But few have not known what it is to sit by the long sick-bed, to watch the weary warfare, to catch the heavy moan of plaint not complaint, to quiver under the labouring sigh, the wistful look, the difficult breathing ; aware of the impossibility, humanly, of recovery. Oh ! as we saw the face 'changing,' the eye growing dim and dimmer to 'the old familiar faces,' the hand unable to return the feeblest clasping, the old old



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story being fulfilled of 'the silver cord' breaking, the 'golden bowl' breaking, the 'pitcher' breaking 'at the fountain,' the 'wheel' breaking 'at the cistern,'—and assured that were the sore struggle ended there should be Rest, Peace, Heaven, Eternal Life,—then we have felt and all but said even when our tears were falling like rain, and our hearts were crushed to well-nigh bursting, and we knew that the closing of those eyes should darken the bright world to us, 'Would that it pleased Him to end the pitiful struggle!' 'All but said.' I make the reservation: for we could not say it, could not 'give thanks' for the death of any we loved. No. We cling and covet possession until the very close.

I need hardly observe that it was not another who offered the strange 'thanks' of which I have been telling, neither for another. The speaker was the Lord Jesus Himself, in the prime



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of His holy and beautiful manhood and I call it a strange thing that He thus 'gave thanks' for His own death

3. *The event*, makes the 'thanks touching and strange. The 'thanks were not only for death, for His own death; but think of the *kind of death* it was. A death of shame, of curse, of inexpressible dreadfulness. 'When He had given thanks, He brake it.' 'Brake it!' 'This He said, signifying what death He should die' (John xii. 33). The passages already adduced have partially anticipated this closing aspect of the 'Thanks.' But I recur to one of them to deepen its significance to you. We read: 'And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified.' How little we think of what the Lord had to endure each time He 'went up' to Jeru-

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blasphemed there,—saw and foresaw how He should be carried from 'prison to judgment,' from Jew to Gentile,—saw and foresaw His 'scourging' and crown of thorns, and reed-sceptre, and mantle of mock royalty,—saw and foresaw Himself fainting and falling under the burden of His cross, and another Simon than His own Simon—and him compelled' — bearing it, — saw and foresaw Himself nailed, transfixed, lifted up,' the centre of a ribald multitude, with not one relieving hand, pitying look, interceding word,—saw and foresaw Himself even on the cold night (so cold that Peter stood near the fire to warm himself) stripped of His poor raiment, while His one seamless 'garment' should be gambled for at the foot of the Cross,—saw and foresaw His cry of uttermost anguish, such cry as nor earth nor hell has ever heard, tossed back upon Him with a pun on its mournful 'Eli, Eli,'—saw and fore-



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saw the gates of hell unbarred, and
the Sea of Wrath unshored, that it
might burst and break with all its bil-
lows over His breaking heart,—saw and
foresaw toward His death the 'hour
of the 'Prince' and 'power of dark-
ness,' closing in huge gloom about Him
and above Him, beneath Him and with
in Him,—saw it all, foresaw it all. And
it all, felt it all, weighed it all. And
yet in the prospect, and in symboliz-
ing it, 'gave thanks.' Surely if ever
touching and strange thing has been
done, it was now and in this. Be it
ours to open our innermost hearts to
the melting fact, that we may be moved,
yea stirred, yea electrified, to adore and
'give thanks' for words so Divinely
magnanimous, for thanks so preter-
humanly 'strange.' Be it ours, as the
wondrous record is read by us, is heard
in presence of the memorial-symbols, to
muse over the calm so sublime, that
thus with hands that were within a few

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hours to be pierced with the nails, 'gave thanks.'

We have been speaking of 'strange' things, and yet there are things stranger still. Is it not 'strange' that there should be any of all mankind who hear of such a Saviour and do not love Him? And O! is it not 'strange' beyond all strangeness, that there should be one to *hate* Him?

We pass on: Ver. 24. . . . 'This is My body, which is broken *for* you.' I lay stress on that little word '*for*.' Its wide and blessed meaning, as declaring the Lord Jesus to have been THE SUBSTITUTE of His people, is interpreted to us very tenderly by Isa. liii. 1-12. Let no one say retrospectively, 'I had nothing to do with crucifying the Lord;' let no one under the illusion of feeling exclaim with Clovis the Goth: 'Had I been there with my Franks, I had avenged His injuries.' For if it hold not retrospectively, how shall it hold or carry 'good tidings' with it prospec-

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tively? How shall it reach forward in saving power and grace to you and me, and 'whosoever will' until the latest time? Explain away this 'for,' fritter down the life of Jesus to an Example, however splendid, and His death to a martyrdom, however illustrious, and you make an enigma of the one, and a deeper enigma of the other. Whereas, accept what is 'most certainly' written; and all is reconciled, all is accounted for, and you have the immense mystery of sin out-worked and overcome, irradiated and relieved by the immenser and peace-bringing 'mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh;' with its fringe of shadow in the twofold wonder of righteousness by substitution, and redemption by atoning love. Atonement, Sacrifice, Substitution . . . nothing less can be given to that 'for' 'broken for you.'

'For you.' The Lord was addressing His 'eleven' disciples—Judas 'after

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the sop' of the Passover having 'gone out' on his treasonous errand. And what they were told as for themselves, they were commissioned by Him to go out and tell unto all the world. So that wherever there is a human being conscious of sin, and turning, however weakly and slowly, to Jesus as his Saviour, there comfort, even assured salvation, may be fetched from the glorious words, 'broken for *you*.'

'This do in remembrance of Me.' The Passover had been in remembrance of the redemption in Egypt and out of Egypt. This was to be in remembrance of Jesus. Very humble was the demand, 'remembrance,' and affecting as humble. Others should forget, or only remember to mock, to scoff, and scorn. Would they not 'remember' Him? Would they not at least cherish and honour His else dishonoured memory?

'This *do*.' It was a law—a commandment. It is plain, and at once

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victory; and be more afraid to stand from the Sacrament in regard of God's commandment, than to come to the Sacrament in regard of thy discouragement. God's commandment says, "Go; thine own discouragement says, "Go not." Give obedience rather to God's commandment than to thine own fears.'

Be it observed, then, that when we are seated at the Table of the Lord, we are above all to occupy ourselves by resolute effort, and concentration, and prayer for the Spirit, with the loved memory of Jesus. We are for the time to forget ourselves and think of Him—look up from ourselves and away to Him—rejoice and 'be glad' in 'remembrance' of Him. Let that be steadily, earnestly done, with full up-giving of ourselves to Him, with a willing and joyous consecration of thought and

¹ 'Worthy Communicant,' 1645, p. 439, 440.

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to concentrated 'remembrance' of Him; and what He is and has, do we realize the tender claim of the Saviour to 'remember' Him at His Table. I am satisfied that much of the straitening and hindrance, much of the earthliness and evanescence of our sacramental experiences, springs out of our persistent concern about ourselves, our own frames and feelings, our own state, instead of opening our entire soul to memories of Jesus. Let self-examination precede and succeed, but never let it include The Supper. There our part is, to 'remember' Jesus.

I proceed: Ver. 25, 'After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.'¹

¹ He not only gave Himself for us—as already emphasized—but He gives

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'After the same manner'—we are to understand by this that it was with renewed 'Thanks.' And if, when He 'took bread' and 'brake it,' He said, 'This is My body,' and in so doing 'gave thanks' for His 'manifestation' in the 'flesh,' and for that 'body' given Him, that by it He might die; in like manner we may conclude that the second 'thanks' would especially embrace the 'blood-shedding' of Calvary, symbolized by the 'cup' with its 'wine.' Once more, let the symbol of 'the blood,' and what was involved in it, melt and move us.

But grasping the double 'thanks'—

Himself *to* us; and this is the divine method of life and growth. '*For* us:' this is a giving *to* us, which implies a receiving, and is symbolized by eating and drinking. The Lord's Supper shows the two things with equal force and beauty.

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the thanks for 'the bread' as the memorial of His 'body,' the thanks for 'the cup of wine' as the memorial of His 'blood' about to be shed—observe how it was the Lord thus 'gave thanks.'

1. *For His Disciples.*—He was very soon to be sundered from them. Let His 'death' not be 'accomplished,' and theirs should be an eternal parting. Only through the blood-red gate of His pierced side—only through the more awful 'Red Sea' of His blood—could their redemption be achieved. But by His death eternity should stamp not parting but meeting—by His death their redemption should be secured. And so He 'gave thanks.'

2. *For the World.*—The curse of God lay on man as Fallen—as guilty—as at 'enmity' with God. Let Him not 'die,' and the curse must abide—the tremendous shadow of wrath be unlifted—the race perish. Let Him 'die,' and from all 'given' unto Him



'through faith' the curse should be removed—for 'heirs of darkness' there should be 'children of light'—and for a perishing world a 'multitude whom no man might number' *saved*. 'He saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied.' And so He 'gave thanks,' Yea, out in the 'multitude' that on the morrow was to girdle His Cross, He saw three thousand Jerusalem sinners quickened to 'believe;' and caught up the song upon the jasper-pavement, of those who had passed into glory, 'believing' on Him, and trusting to His 'death.' He 'gave thanks.'

3. *For His Father.*—Very touching was that exclamation of the Lord, 'Oh! righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee.' Jesus knew the infinite Love of His Father's heart toward His sinful creatures—knew how only thus by His death could that love express itself in reconciliation of Justice, Righteousness,

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Holiness, Truth, Law universal reaching upward to the Throne, downward to the Abyss, and over the Earth. And so He 'gave thanks,' and 'accomplished' the stupendous work whereby 'God might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus' (Rom. iii. 26).

'The new testament in My blood.' It was no longer to be a 'remembrance' by the 'blood' of 'bulls or of goats,' or of The Lamb, but by a 'new' symbol of His 'blood.'

'As oft as ye drink it.' There is no specification of how 'often.' The Lord, as I already remarked, softens His law into an appeal. Love in our heart will make us eager to embrace every possible opportunity of so 'remembering' Jesus. Dean Stanley, on the passage, seems to think the 'oft' meant at all their meals or whenever they ate bread or drank wine; but the emphatic 'this,' if doubtful before 'cup' is not at all so



before 'bread.' So of course it means when ye take 'this' special 'bread' as distinguishing the occasion from ordinary meals.

ANDREW FULLER, in a manuscript with the use of which I have been kindly favoured by its possessor (Dr. Charles Stanford, of London), writes on the 'oft' thus:—'The time for celebrating the Lord's Supper is undetermined, only it must be "often."' Again: in a letter to the late Rev. Christopher Anderson, of Edinburgh, he says—'I think *we* eat it "often," but *you* oftener; we do *well*, perhaps you do *better*, but neither of us act contrary to the institution of Christ. Mr. McLean and Mr. James Haldane deny that 1 Cor. xi. 26, proves that it ought to be "often," and that if it be not weekly, it might as well be only once a year, or in seven years. But I have endeavoured to prove that the comparative always supposes the positive, or that the phrase *as*

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often as, which goes to determine the frequency of a thing by some other thing, supposes both to be frequent. The comparative mode of speaking relates to the *degree* of frequency; but it were absurd to talk of degrees of frequency where no frequency is. It would not be as "*oft*" if it were *not* "*oft*."

'As oft as *ye* drink it.' It is a social, not a merely individual observance. Sick-room sufferers need not be anxious. It is not binding until they are able to join those who meet in His name.

We pass on: Ver. 26, 'For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do *show* the Lord's death *till He come*.'

I have emphasized two points in this verse. 1. The word '*show*.' 2. The words '*till He come*.'

1. '*Show*,' represent, symbolize.

. Here I have been wont to expose the errors of Popery: *e.g.* Granted

there were transubstantiation (though a hideous lie), that is not what Jesus asks. He says 'show.'

2. *'Till He come.'*

Here I have usually taken the opportunity of dwelling upon the 'Second Coming' of the Lord, the Final Coming to Judgment. In view of it, these words 'till He come' explain how just at the moment that the old system of types and 'shadows' was being abolished, the Lord erected a new and permanent type, viz., The others were abolished as being accomplished; whereas the fulness of blessing by the death of Christ should not and will not be accomplished 'till He come.' For that unfulfilled part, for what was to reach on far into the future, the 'new' type was required. Further: It was very tenderly considerate in the Lord to leave something visible and tangible whereby to lift us up to the invisible. Just as in prayer, while the shut door,

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the bowed knees, the articulate words as toward God, have no efficacy, but nevertheless are a help to us ; so the Lord's Supper is a help at once to our faith and brotherhood. It draws us nearer to one another—it aids us to think what heaven is, where we shall 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' I knew one aged Believer, tottering, feeble, deaf, utterly unable to hear either praise or prayer or preaching, but to whom the Supper was a sweet refreshment. We have received much of the 'mind of Christ,' when such is our relish and longing. For what said the Lord in view of the Last Supper (first and last in one to Him)? 'With desire I have desired to eat *this* passover with you before I suffer' (Luke xxii. 15). Nor is this Christ-like yearning other than we would expect in a child of God ; for herein, observes Dr. Boys, 'is a great difference between corporeal food and this heavenly bread:

for the one digested is made like us, but the other received into our soul maketh us like it,' like Him (Rom. viii. 29; Phil. iii. 10).¹

Once more: As matter-of-fact, He who 'of old' employed the 'shadow' of Peter falling across the street, to 'heal,' and 'napkins' and the like whereby to impart manifold blessings—not to speak of His own use of outward means—can and does and will, in response to faith, make the little bread we 'eat,' and the little 'wine' we drink, nourish and nurture our souls. If we more felt that 'man liveth not by bread alone,' but by the Divine blessing thereupon, we should have less difficulty in realizing how by these physical symbols the Lord of 'the Feast' stands prepared to communicate spiritual mercies—'waits' to make them as 'manna' to our innermost souls. Alas! that, like

¹ Works, p. 62.

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Israel, we so poorly appreciate our 'heavenly food.'

Again: with reference to the symbols, Henry Smith may be allowed to speak:—

'Now if you ask me why Christ called the sign by the name of the thing itself? I ask thee again, Mayest thou say, when thou seest the picture of the Queen, "This is the Queen"? and when thou seest the picture of a lion, "This is a lion"? And may not Christ say when He seeth a thing like His body, "This is my body"? The reason why the signs have the names of the things is to strike a deep reverence in us to receive this sacrament of Christ reverently, and holily, as if that Christ were there present in body and blood Himself.' 'Our doctrine must be examined by the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles; our prayers must be examined by the six portions of Christ's prayer; our belief must be

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examined by the twelve articles of our faith (the Creed); our life must be examined by the ten commandments of the Law. Now he which hath this touchstone may try gold from copper; but he which hath it not, takes one for the other. Therefore before Paul's "examine" you had need to learn Christ's "search." "Search the Scriptures," and they will lighten you to search yourselves.'¹

* * * Under each of these I have found excellent means of getting at the Scriptural knowledge and Christian experience, or the opposite, of Applicants.

We proceed: Ver. 27, 'Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord *unworthily*, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.'

I would invite earnest attention to the word '*unworthily*' in this verse.

¹ Sermons, as before, pp. 48, 59.

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The child of God is apt to 'write bitter things' against himself in the discovery of his remaining sin, in the mournful coldness and poverty of his grace, in the weakness of his faith, in the earthliness of his love. We do well to be 'angry' with ourselves because of all these. But 'unworthily' is *not* to be read as if it were 'unworthy.' We are all 'unworthy,' to the latest and last will continue 'unworthy,' in heaven will know only One 'worthy;' but that is one thing, and 'unworthily' is another and different thing. When we feel ourselves most of all 'unworthy,' we are most of all welcome to the Lord Jesus. So that never, never, as being poor, worthless, 'unworthy' sinners, let us stay back from the Table of the Lord. We shall thereby do hurt to ourselves, and mistake our dear Saviour. Luther has finely said, 'He is most worthy that is most unworthy, viz. that is sensible of his unworthiness.' Good Richard Vines observes: 'I look

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for no preparation that shall not stand in need of mercy. If I see so much in myself as makes myself empty, and that emptiness doth make me athirst for Christ, then I shall not dispute my preparation, but deny my worthiness and yet come.'¹ Finally, Anthon: Farindon, in the same line, remarks 'If we can truly say, "we are unworthy," we make ourselves "worthy," and thus we set forward towards it. But groundless scrupulosity, which many times is rather the issue of pride than the daughter of humility, seeth the way, and then sitteth down in it, and then maketh every pebble a mountain, puzzleth and perplexeth us; setting us a framing and fashioning dangers and inconveniences to ourselves.'

To eat or drink 'unworthily,' is to do so at the Supper, as attaching no 'worth,' no significance, no precious-

¹ On 'The Lord's Supper,' p. 307.
² Works, ii. p. 87.

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ness, no memorial-service, to the ordinance. It is to do what the Corinthians did, eating as at an ordinary meal ; and while professing to 'show' the Lord's death, be occupied merely about eating and drinking, shutting out all memories, all 'remembrance' of Christ. That is to celebrate The Supper 'unworthily.' That is to bring ourselves under the guilt of the very crucifiers of the Lord. Let a shadow of awe come upon us in the thought ; let us beware with a 'holy fear' of forgetting what it is we are about when we 'keep' the Lord's Supper. An old Writer observes: 'In the right receiving thereof, we must make it a work not *dentis* [of the tooth], but *mentis* [of the mind] : not so much to look on the elements what they are, but what they signify: look through the bush and see God, through the Sacrament and see Christ Jesus to our comfort.'¹

¹ Philip Edlin, 1652.

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Read and ponder Eph. iv. 1; Phil. i. 27; Rom. xvi. 2; Col. i. 10; and 1 Thess. ii. 12.

With reference to the latter half of ver. 27, 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,' Bohemus furnishes an excellent commentary: 'If a man,' he says, 'had been alive at the time when and the place where Christ was crucified, and had seen Him upon the cross bleeding and dying, without any sympathizing in his heart at the sufferings and death of Christ, this man had been guilty of Christ's death, as one secretly and tacitly consenting to it. No less guilty is he that comes to the Lord's Supper and is not inwardly affected with Christ's death, nor afflicted for his own sins as the cause of His death. The guilt of Christ's blood shall certainly be laid to that man's charge. Whosoever seeth another commit a sin and is not grieved at it, he bears a secret liking or approbation to that sin

in his spirit, and commits the same sin inwardly which another commits outwardly ; and so he that can see Christ crucified before his eyes at the Lord's Supper, and grieve not at his own sins and the sins of others as the cause of it, he doth secretly and inwardly approve of the same sin that Judas committed in betraying Christ, or the Jews in accusing Christ, or the soldiers in crucifying Christ ; and therefore, in the sight of God, he will be found guilty of the most wicked deed that ever was done upon the face of the earth by the hands of men, in slaying of the Lord of life, the King of Glory, the Son of God. Unholy, unhumbled, and unpenitent Communicants are no better than the murderers of Christ.*¹

Further, ver. 28, '*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*'

¹ 'A Christian's Delight, or Morning Meditations.' 1654. Pp. 50, 51.

The 'But' here is precious. There need be no such eating and drinking 'unworthily.' It is a thing under our own cognizance and control, by Divine help.

Then I have italicized and emphasized the '*so*.' This 'so' has a double reference. It is like the centre pivot of a two-leaved gate.

1. 'So.' That is, after 'examination.' We are not, either in the beginning or subsequently, to 'make haste' in sitting down at the Table of the Lord. Granted that we have got in His sovereign and free mercy 'grace,' granted that we have been 'born again,' granted that we do love the Saviour; nevertheless we are to 'take heed,' we are to be deliberate, we are to 'try,' to 'prove,' to 'test' our Christianhood,—we are to live awhile *for* Christ as well as live *in* Him, that we may indeed know that we have passed from 'death unto life.' I believe that conversion is a creative work of a moment, but so is the 'life'

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of our human nature ; yet none the less is it true that the spiritual 'birth' is infantine at first, and needs to 'grow' and mature (changing the metaphor), if not to full fruit, at least to leafage and blossom. Don't be too eager to publicly 'profess'—have a holy caution : 'examine,' and *so* eat of that bread and drink of that cup. That is, after such examination, and finding that, by His grace, 'it is well' with you, you may and ought, nay ~~must~~, *so* remember Jesus.

2. 'So.' That is, in the manner and with the 'memories' that have been enjoined. Let the ordinance be to you what I have designed by it—let it be a memorial of Me, a 'remembrance' of Me—let it keep up My 'death' as the present becomes the past—let it point onward to the Future when I shall come again—and 'so' eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

Let us pause a few moments on the subject of self-examination.



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1. Be it noted, that in preparing for The Supper, it is ourselves, *not others*, we are to 'examine.' We are not to be 'thinking' of A., or B., or C., or others present or absent, and be 'judging' them, or 'blowing' their character. All severity of scrutiny must be turned upon *ourselves*. Says Henry Smith, 'The good sower doth sow his own ground ; but the bad sower doth sow another man's ground, as the devil did. The disciples of Christ said, "Master ! is it I ?" not "Master ! is it he ?" The disciples of John asked, "Master ! what shall we do ?" not "Master ! what shall they do ?" We must obey some, and hear others, and admonish others, and love all, but examine *ourselves*.'¹

2. Be it noted, that in preparing for The Supper, the 'examine' of the Apostle demands more than a hurried,

¹ Sermons, ed. 1675, 4to. p. 61.

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superficial look. It is a very weighty word and thing. It demands that we form a right estimate of ourselves. The following passages, wherein the same word is used (in the Original), furnish 'materials' for insight into the depth of what is required :—1 Cor. iii. 13 (as by fire); 1 Pet. i. 7; and Zech. xiii. 9 (in Septuagint); Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. viii. 8, xiii. 5; Gal. vi. 4. O! let us be willing to have the 'candle of the Lord' to 'search' us—willing to have the all-revealing light flashed in upon the innermost shrine of our soul—willing to know the very truth about ourselves. 'Wicked men,' says Smith, 'feel the loathsomeness of their vices; but none but the faithful feel the defects of their righteousness.' Again, in another department of self-examination, Bradshaw tersely remarks: 'God's special saving graces may be in us, and yet not always apparent

¹ As before, p. 68.

unto us, but may some time lie hidden in the soul, until by some special search they be discovered ; else such trials [= examinations] as these should be needless. As, therefore, it is matter of humiliation to all good Christians, that upon due trial they find more corruptions in themselves than there did before appear unto them ; so this may be a special comfort, that there are also in them (which by diligent trial they shall find) greater graces than ever they imagined to be in themselves. This therefore should encourage us to search ourselves so much the more narrowly ; for if we shall, by a careful search, find in our souls but any one grace, or but any degree of a grace more than we did perceive before, it will bring more sound comfort and joy into our hearts than if we had found a hidden treasure of silver or gold.' ¹

¹ As before, pp. 36, 57, sec. 2.

‘Whether we hate a sin as much or more in ourselves than in another ; and whether we love another because of conscience he forbearth to sin ?’ ‘Whether we hate and abhor in ourselves not only those sins that are hateful and detestable in the eyes of men, but even those also which men will account a grace and honour unto us to commit them, and for which they will recompense and reward us, when it shall be revealed to us out of God’s Word that they are sins.’¹

4. Be it noted, that this self-examination does not release from such conversations as a Minister requires of every Communicant. Here I would allow the writer last quoted to speak : ‘This trial of ourselves,’ says Bradshaw, ‘doth not exclude the trial which others, as far as they are able, are to

¹ Bradshaw, as before, pp. 70, 71, ¶ 2.

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make of us, especially our governors, teachers, and instructors, such as have the cure and charge of our souls, but it rather strengtheneth and confirmeth the same. For they who in singleness of heart shall once set themselves to this work, shall find it of that difficulty that they will be glad of any furtherance and direction that they can get. For those trials and examinations that others are to make of us, are but helps and directions how we may, in the best manner, try and examine ourselves. Those, therefore, who are so ready to conclude from thence, that others have nothing to do to examine them, because they are required to examine themselves, might as well conclude that nobody else is to care for or do good to them, because they are to care for, provide for, and do good for themselves.'¹

Finally : '*So let a man examine him-*

¹ As before, pp. 77, 78.

self.' He ought not to stay away because some one else takes it 'unworthily.' Let the faulty person be dealt with according to Scripture, but my place is to 'do this' in remembrance of Christ.¹

We have a fuller statement of what underlies the word 'unworthily' in ver. 29, 'For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation [judgment] to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.' You perceive the clause 'not discerning the Lord's body' interprets that which those who kept the Supper 'unworthily' had no discernment of, no reference to, that which gave significance and value to the service—the 'sacrifice' of Christ symbolized by the bread and wine. Be it far

¹ I would very earnestly recommend Matthew Henry's 'Communicant's Companion,' as a great help in this self-examination.

shunned. Their offence I have already indicated generally. Looked at more closely, it resolves itself into two things.

1. Not seeing under the symbols *what* is represented.

2. Not understanding and being impressed by the *necessity* of what is represented.

be prepared with much larger arguments than were fitting in a thing like this. But I add here an irrefragable retort by the venerable Arthur Hildersam on above heresies. 'If the substance of the bread and wine,' he says, 'were changed into the very body and blood of Christ, then the reprobate who receive this sacrament should also eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ (John vi. 54, 56), which is impossible, and contrary to the Holy Scriptures' ('The Doctrine of Communicating Worthily in the Lord's Supper.' 9th ed. 1636. Pp. 66, 67). In the trials of the

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To 'discern' is elsewhere in the Bible used to express 'judging so as to see through and through a thing;' that is, applied to the Supper, to see through the symbols, the Redeemer broken in body and soul, and also to see why this was needed. Or, to put it in another form, clearly to see what the bread and wine symbolize in setting forth Christ, and also what need there was for Christ being so set forth to sinners as broken or bruised in soul and body. Or, to put it

Henrian and Marian martyrs, the bodily presence of Christ is almost always chosen as the true battlefield to decide the conflict between the old light and the new. Latimer gives the English of what the Reformers believed — "Bread is *bread*, and wine is *wine*. There is a change, it is true, at the Lord's Supper, but the change is not in the nature but in the dignity" (given from memory).

in a sentence, to 'discern the Lord's body,' is a discriminating perception of the meaning of the symbols, and of the value of the truths set forth thereby. In fine, to 'discern' the Lord's body is to distinguish the symbols accurately, and to estimate properly the fact and truths expressed thereby.¹

And now, having gone over the Warrant, I would, in a closing sentence, remind all Communicants that the Church of Christ is a holy *brotherhood*; and that if even eating an ordinary meal in an inn together, especially in a

¹ Compare Matt. xvi. 3 = though ye accurately note, thoroughly and clearly read off, the significance of the phenomena of the sky. . . . So 1 Cor. xi. 31. = if we thoroughly see our own state; and xiv. 29 = let the prophets judge, look into the things uttered, and thoroughly weigh them. Job xii. 11 (in Septuagint); Prov. xvii. 3.

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there are opportunities furnished for examination and instruction in the whole circle of doctrine and experience. —Personally I have found it easy in the third visit, by recalling this, that, and the other point, to speak of the Fall—the Federal Headship of Adam—the Covenant—man's corruption by nature—his need of a change of nature—his personal inability—Faith—Justification—Sanctification—Living for Christ—Works. In numerous cases—would in all!—there will be such evidence of real Christianhood as renders any such detailed doctrinal conversation needless—for that, the experimental may be substituted. Finally, I have invariably made it a condition of church-membership, that less or more service shall be personally rendered by the Applicant. Prudence has to be exercised herein; but often Applicants who never would volunteer to become Sunday School Teachers or Visitors, or

in any way to act in the Christian work of a congregation, are eager to respond to a minister's personal request. Apart from the regular organization of a Congregation, a minister can engage an applicant to see to such things as these:—Do you sing? Well, there is a poor old widow, or a young dying girl, who should greatly enjoy a softly sung 'Song of Zion' now and again.—Do you have a garden? or Do you know any who have? Well! You would greatly cheer such and such were you now and again to carry a pretty flower, a spray of hawthorn, a bunch of violets thither.—Have you an hour or two to spare on a Sabbath evening? Well! Such and such is bedrid, and never gets to Church. Could you step in and tell as much of the sermon or praises as possible?—Can you conveniently go a little earlier than the hour of the prayer-meeting? Well! Go and give your arm to that frail old man or woman; or

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look in upon that or this not unlikely to forget it is the prayer-meeting night, and quietly influence them to go.— Have you means? Have you time? Have you any special faculty? Well— And so on. Let the watchwords be : *‘Every Believer must be a Worker;’* *‘For every member a post, and a post for every member.’*

Assuming that there is continued satisfaction with the Applicant, I have usually turned next to the two questions of the Westminster ‘Confession of Faith’ or ‘Shorter Catechism,’ and briefly, from them, summed up previous conversations. They are as follows :

Question : What is the Lord’s Supper?

Answer : The Lord’s Supper is a sacrament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ’s appointment, His death is showed forth ; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal



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manner [*i.e.* not as eating of the actual flesh or body, '*corpus*' or '*caro*'], but by faith made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

Question : What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

Answer : It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon Him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience ; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Minister.—Well, my friend, I am satisfied with your knowledge—I accept your profession—I trust you altogether, and therefore I shall report your name to the Session. Thereafter I shall ask you to call upon the Elder of your district, that he may know you and converse with you.

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Applicant.—Do you admit your members publicly?

Minister.—I do; and when the Session (Elders) ratify my judgment of your fitness to be received, you will have an intimation sent you, and I shall address you and others who may be present before the congregation.

Minister.—Now, having spoken of what more immediately concerns yourself, I would in a very few words put before you (1) certain duties that fall to be discharged by all who become members of the Church of Christ; (2) I shall give you a 'Statement of Principles' held by the . . . Church, and the questions at the end of which you will publicly answer on your being admitted. [I leave the place blank, as I hope my little book will be found useful for all sections of the Church, albeit I have primary reference to the Presbyterian Church of England.]

1. Certain duties that fall to be dis-

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charged by all who become members of the Church of Christ.

(1.) *Daily Prayers*—private and in the household. Never substitute the one for the other. Both needed.

(2.) *Daily reading of the Bible*.—I cannot prescribe how long or how short time you are to occupy in this. That must be left to your own conscience. But let me give an advice from Thomas White: 'It is better to vow to spend *some time* in reading Holy Scripture or such like, than to read so many chapters; for thou wilt be tempted to read them over too fast, that thou mayest have ended; whereas if it be so much time that thou hast resolved to spend, thou wilt not be so subject to this temptation.'

(3.) *Attendance on Ordinances*.—Make it your rule never to be absent from the Church or prayer-meeting, except the reason be one that you can tell the Lord.

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on former like occasions I have spoken on topics such as these :—1. '*Abide in Christ.*' That is to say, see to it, that being 'in Christ,' there be 'abiding' in Him ; be the union not of mere outward Church-membership symbolized by the girding and ligatures of the 'graff,' but a vital relation, as of the living branch let into the living vine, and thence drawing sap. 2. To-day the Starting, the Race yet to run. 3. 'Let us reason *together.*' 4. '*Putting on the whole armour of God.*' 5. '*Holy Boldness.*' 6. 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.' I mark eyes brightening here, lids drooping there, as their texts and their addresses are recalled on hearing this brief roll. Well ! To-day I give you, my young friends, a memorable text, that I hope you will never forget. You will find it in 1 Sam. xxv. 25 : 'As is his name, so is he.' Now, unexplained, these might seem curious words to ask you to take

away with you on such an occasion as this. But I intend to explain them a little.

I daresay you know that people's names long ago were very often prophetic of what they were to be. Thus, when Isaiah called his one boy 'Shear-Jashub,' which means 'the remnant shall return,' and his other boy 'Maher-shalal-hash-baz,' which means 'make haste to the spoil,' it was because those children were to symbolize certain events that were to take place when they should be full-grown men. So that by giving them their names Isaiah showed his unwavering confidence in his covenant-God, and also rendered his boys 'preachers' of hope to Israel. You can in like manner 'search out' other Bible names, as of Abram changed to Abraham, Jacob to Israel, Saul to Paul; and above all, you can't think too much of the name which is above all names—Jesus (Matt. i. 21). All



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this is different now. You, my young friends, were called John, and James, and Andrew, and Mary, and Margaret, not because your parents knew beforehand you were to be what your names signify, viz. John, 'the gift of God ;' James, which is just Jacob, 'a supplanter ;' Andrew, 'a strong man ;' Mary, 'a tear ;' Margaret, 'a pearl.' O ! I trust, John, you are indeed God's 'gift' to your father and mother, and to this congregation ; and you, James, I trust you are like the Old Testament Jacob, an Israel ; and you, Andrew, 'be strong ;' and you, Mary, that you will drop your tears on Jesus' feet ; and you, Margaret, that you will be an orient pearl in the regalia of the King.

But all this was unintended by your names. Mark, however, this, my young friends, my fellow-members now, of the Church and of this congregation, my dear Brothers and Sisters,—before the great Heart-Searcher you get to-day

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from my lips,—ratified, I believe expect, by Him,—a name that is so amid all these changes, intended to ye a demands to be, prophetic. (my young fellow-communicants, venerable, the holy name of Christ: must be illustrated in your after liv Professing to be 'in Christ,' professi to have got from Him the new hea professing to love Him, professing: be His 'for the life that now is, and f that which is to come,' you are henc forward pledged to be all your augu names express. By the grace of Jesu you are to seek to be what 'believe; means, and 'converted' means, an 'Christian' means, and 'born again means, and 'child of God' means, an 'heir, joint-heir,' mean, In short, lik Nabal, but in a good sense, 'as you name is' so must you be,—Christ-like ones.

Now, Communicants for the first time, I have had very much close deal-

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ing and heart contact with each of you apart, and with all of you, the one before the other; so that you cannot be ignorant whither to apply for strength, and wisdom, and grace to enable you to be what the names you now bear demand. As Pharaoh said of old, 'Go to Joseph,' so I say now, 'Go to Jesus.' You never can 'weary' Him. You never can ask too much from Him. You never can take difficulty to Him that He will not meet. You will only stand fast as you stand in Him. Num. vi. 24-27. Amen and Amen.





NOTES.

ADD here a few suggestions of confirmations and illustrations of statements in text, from that inestimable book *Die Lehre von der heiligen Lie* of Ernst Sartorius (Stuttgart 1866). These are but a few rough wash grains of gold from a mine which were to do good service to make accessible to the English reader. Our short extracts are given very much as striking thought was come upon; but our headings prefixed may compensate for the disadvantage of their miscellaneous character, and show the links that bind them to the successive topics.

handled by us. Of course they are mainly intended not for Communicants, but for the Pastor.

(1.) *The Supper intimately connected with The Sacrifice.*—‘The connection of the Holy Supper with the Expiatory Offering of Christ appears so plainly in the simply sublime words of institution, that detailed proof is not required. The Holy Supper is nothing else than the Christ-appointed dispensing and appropriating of His body offered and blood shed for us. It was instituted on that night in which He was betrayed, immediately before the presenting of His most holy Sacrifice. This connection shows that the main object of the Sacrament is not so much in general the communication of the fellowship of Christ’s LIFE, as rather in particular the communication of the fellowship of His sufferings, or the appropriation of His sacrifice. For it is not His body

and blood simply that are given to us, but His body broken and His blood poured forth for us. The Sacrifice, it is true, was not yet completed at the time of institution, but it was on the eve thereof; and further, the institution of it was to establish the Holy Supper not merely for the time then present, when Christ was yet visibly among us, but for the whole of that future wherein the invisible presence of His sacrificed body should be enjoyed by the Church in memorial of Him.' (p. 179).

(2.) *Communion based on love.*—'It is love which moved The Father to give up The Son into the fashion of a man and servant, and thus form that intimate communion of the Divine with the human nature. It is love which moves the Incarnate Son of God to give Himself up to His fellow-men, and to enter with them into the communion of His

body and blood, and thereby to communicate all manner of Divine fulness (Eph. iii. 19). The Holy Supper presupposes that offering of deepest love and self-denial which was consummated on the Cross, as the most entire surrender into the Father's hand; and is on its part a surrender not indeed towards God, but towards men who desire reconciliation and reunion with God. Everything here breathes love: all points to union, communion, communication' (p. 181).

(3.) *The Sacrifice celebrated, not repeated in The Supper.*—'Once in the fulness of the time the Atoning Sacrifice was rendered on the Cross, never to lose its efficacy to all eternity. Once Christ entered by His own blood into the Holy Place, to appear in the presence of God for us. But just because this happened *for us*, there is kept up continually the dispensation of the

Offering presented for us. This is not presented in The Supper to God anew as a sin-offering, but rather dispensed to us that we may apply it to ourselves in faith as our reconciliation with God. Needful to our salvation as it is that The Father should give up The Son, and again The Son give Himself up to The Father, it is needful also that The Son should give Himself to us : and this is done in the Holy Supper' (p. 182).

(4.) *Material elements the channel of spiritual blessings.*—'Just as the immaterial spirit of man has a material body by which it operates, so every communication which it receives of an immaterial thing must in some way be materialized for it, so that even the communication of ideal thoughts only takes place by word and symbol, is only accomplished by the medium of mouth and hand, of eye and ear' . . . (pp.

the sake of such as feel themselves poor in the righteousness which avails with God, and being separated from Him by sin, long for reconciliation and reunion with Him. The true worthiness consists rather in the feeling of unworthiness than in that of worthiness. Those who are wanting in righteousness and unassured of Christ, but striving after Him, Who is the Truth and the Life, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, are, because the most susceptible, therefore the most worthy guests for that banquet in which we have nothing to bring or communicate, but only to receive what is bought or communicated to us' (p. 187).

(6.) *God's graciousness in His Sacraments.*—Melancthon beautifully remarks, 'The manner of worship under the Law was to bring our gifts to God; on the contrary, the manner of worship under the Gospel is to receive God's

gifts to us.' The Sacraments are holy acts not such as we perform to God, but such as He performs to us ; and not such as wherein He lays upon us an office, or a service, or a duty, because this, even though associated with promises, is ever something of a legal nature, but such as wherein He communicates to us the gifts of His redeeming grace to be received through our faith. This communication takes place it is true through God's Word in the Gospel, to which corresponds on the side of man the word of prayer, be it thanksgiving for benefits already received, or entreaty for those yet to be received. But that faith may lay hold of these with the more confidence and assurance, the communication or bestowment takes place in the concrete form of Sacrament by means of sensible, visible symbols appointed by Christ Himself, as bearers of His spiritual blessings, as evidence of the

Divine goodwill toward us. Hence the Sacrament is beautifully named the visible word, or the visible sign of invisible grace' (p. 166).

FINIS.

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